The Portfolio Connection

Newsletter

September, 1992 Vol 1 Issue No. 4

Also in this issue:

News - Page 2
File Transfer Part 2 - Pages 3-5
Prize Draw Winner & BugBears - Page 6
Viewpoint/Classifieds - Page 7
PBasic Coumn - Pages 8-9
Beginners & Atari - Page 9

Biggest Ever Issue!

What - No Catalogue?

Welcome to the fourth *Portfolio Connection* Newsletter. You will probably have noticed that there is no catalogue in with this issue. This is because we are re-writing it to incorporate your comments from the survey questionnaire. We hope this will make the catalogue even easier to use and more helpful. It should be available with the next issue.

The Customer Survey was a big success - see Page 6 for more details and the results of the prize draw.

Memory Storage News

This issue reports more exciting news on memory storage for your Portfolio - turn to Page 2 to get the full story!

Discount Hardware & Accessories

In response to your many requests, we are now stocking a range of peripherals and accessories at unbeatable prices - see the enclosed insert.

Ansaphone Blues

For those of you who hate ansaphones, we would like to apologise if you have found yourself on the receiving end of ours! We are working to respond to your calls more efficiently, but rest assured that we listen to messages frequently and will get back to you as soon as possible. So, grit your teeth, and leave your name, number and a short message after the tone.....Beeeep!

Fax us...

One move in the right direction is that you can now fax us on the same number as our voice line (0491) 36880.

New This Month:

Be sure to read this section thoroughly as there have been quite a few changes as well as new programs and Sets.

New Sets

CM1 - Coms 1

With the steady increase in coms programs over the last few months, we have decided to move them to a set of their own rather than spread them over the Applications Sets as they have been previously. This set contains the following new files:

- **Slave** - reviewed on Page 4
- **XLoad & ALoad** - two programs from a UK author to automate the transfer of Xterm2 or Acom to your Port for the first time.
- **Tinycom** - a small terminal program originally designed to use the Port with Packet Radio.
- **Tmxm** - an earlier version of Xterm.
- **PfSerial.txt** - corrects the errors in the cable diagrams of some serial peripheral manuals.

These files have been moved from existing sets:

- **Xterm2** - from Set AP2
- **Acom** - from Set AP2
- **PFBoot** - from Set AP3
- **Emma** - from Set AP3

DM2 - The Electronic APB

Following The ultimate Portfolio demonstrator in the last issue we now have the Electronic APB. The APB or "Accessories & Peripherals Bulletin" is the American equivalent of DIP's Product Directory. This Electronic version will only work on an IBM PC Compatible with hard disk and VGA screen. A faster processor is desirable and it supports a soundblaster sound card if present. The demo gives a lot of information about peripherals and software for the Portfolio.

PG5 - A86/Monitor/Pascal

With yet more pascal files this issue, we have moved the existing pascal files in Set PG2 to this set. New files include:

- **A86** - the well known assembler which works on the Port.

The next three programs are debuggers for the Portfolio based on the monitor program in "Undocumented DOS" by Tim Paterson:

- **Portmon** - debugger for the Port
- **Sermon** - runs on the Portfolio but controlled by remote computer via the serial port.

Top Ten Sets

1. ⇔ Games 1
2. ⇔ Wordprocessing 1
3. ⇩ PBasic 1
4. ⇔ Utilities 1
5. ⇔ PC Accessories 1
6. ⇩ Utilities 2
7. ⇧ Applications 2
8. ⇧ PC Accessories 2
9. ⇩ Applications 1
10. ⇧ Wordprocessing 2

- **SermonPC** - allows you to debug PC programs from the portfolio via the serial port.
- **Tahoe** - the Pascal source code for the 'Tahoe5' program in Set GM2.
- **TheTao** - 'The Tao of Programming'. A humorous text in PRead format.

These files are shifted from Set PG2:

- **Portfoli.tpu** - access Port features.
- **Purbo** - hack Turbo pascal for Port.
- **Portgra.pas** - graphics routines.

/cont. on page 5

NEWS

More Portfolio Storage News!

High Capacity Cards Shipping

Following our announcement about the new high capacity memory cards last issue, the 256k and 512k cards will soon be available in Britain. They should have already been available but have been subject to a number of delays so our apologies to those of you who have ordered and are still waiting. No doubt the 1Mb and 2Mb cards will follow shortly after. Prices are £149.95 for the 256k card and £199.95 for the 512k card (exclusive of VAT and P+P).

For the next few weeks, *The Portfolio Connection* will be offering these cards at the incredible price of just **£159.95** for the 256k card and **£199.95** for the 512k card INCLUSIVE of VAT and P+P! We can't hold these rock bottom prices for long so if you want one of these cards contact us now!

Hard Disk for the Portfolio!

Yes its true, the American company, BSE, produce a hard disk drive which works with the Portfolio. Named the Flashdrive, it connects to your Portfolio or Pocket PC through the parallel peripheral and opens the way for mass storage. Many American Portfolio owners swear by the Flashdrive and have only the highest praise for it. Two models are available - the Flashdrive 25 is a battery operated model offering storage capacities from 20Mb to 130Mb in a tiny 5"x5"x1½" case and the Flashdrive 35 is a slightly larger mains unit offering storage up to an incredible 510Mb. We suspect that most users would be interested in the smaller Flashdrive 25 fitted with a 20Mb disk and estimate the price being around the £250 mark including VAT. We have some leaflets and reviews of the BSE Flashdrive so if you think this might be for you, contact us for more information.

And now.....Flash Memory Cards!

Still more memory storage news hot off the press! The American company Optrol have developed Flash Memory Cards for the Portfolio. These cards will be the same size as the existing credit card size memory cards and available in 1Mb, 2Mb and 4Mb sizes. These cards do not need batteries and will retain data for 10 years, even with heavy use. Another advantage is the price - about £175 for the 1Mb card! They do have a couple of minor drawbacks, however. A small (about 3k) device driver needs to be loaded for the card to work and, due to the way the cards store data, space from deleted files is not made available until you have 'packed' the card in a similar way to many database programs. This operation only takes 10 seconds, though, and doesn't seem too much of a drawback when the price-savings are taken into account. The cards will not be available in the USA until the end of September, 1992 and so it will probably be a month or so before they are available in Britain. If you would like more information on this exciting new development then contact *The Portfolio Connection*!

MIDI Magic

Calling all Portfolio musicians. You may be interested to know that the German company DVPI produce a MIDI interface for the Portfolio. The unit retails for around £250 and comprises an external peripheral about 5" long and the same height and depth of the Portfolio which plugs into the expansion bus on the right hand side of the Pocket PC. The unit also contains an additional 128k of memory storage for MIDI files which becomes 'drive b:' for the Portfolio. Software is provided for the interface itself along with transfer software for PC and Atari ST computers and will interface with any piece of MIDI equipment. This surely has to be excellent news for musicians on the road, providing a truly portable alternative to a full-size computer. We have some leaflets on the MIDI Portfolio so contact *The Portfolio Connection* for more information.

New DIP Product Directory

DIP have just produced a new Pocket Computer Product Directory. As the name suggests, the brochure is no longer Portfolio-specific and now covers all Palmtop Computers which DIP supply. However, it is a great improvement over the old Product Directory - it is very well laid out, easy to read and its A4 pages are packed with information. Portfolio diehards will be pleased to know that the Atari Portfolio/DIP Pocket PC still comprises the largest section and, by the way, you'll find *The Portfolio Connection* on Page 23! Contact DIP on (0483) 301555 for your copy.

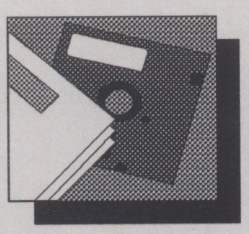
Re:Port Newsletter

Those of you who are hungry for information about the Portfolio will be pleased to know that David E Stewart, an American author who has written many of the programs in our library, produces a bi-monthly subscription newsletter called Re:Port. In addition to news, reviews and programming tips, each issue comes with a disk of Portfolio software. Many of the programs are only available to Re:Port subscribers and have included a number of excellent programs such as a spell checker, a charting program, a coms program and a text viewer which gives you a 60x10 screen rather than the usual 40x8 Portfolio screen. Re:Port also supplies a range of Portfolio accessories and software at discount prices. You can buy a year's subscription directly from America for $53 but to save the hassle involved, we have arranged with David to distribute Re:Port here in Britain. One year's subscription costs just £30 including P+P - contact *The Portfolio Connection* for details.

Atari Parallel Link

In the PortLink review last issue we reported that it was no longer available which meant there was no parallel file transfer facility available for Atari ST. Well, we are pleased to announce in this issue that Swift are producing a parallel transfer pack for ST which includes everything except the parallel peripheral. It is called 'ST Link' and uses the built-in Pocket PC file transfer software. It runs on the ST as ACC or PRG programs, is resolution independent and is fully integrated in the GEM environment. ST Link costs £49.95 (excluding VAT & P+P), but we can supply it for just **£54.95** INCLUDING VAT & P+P. Contact *The Portfolio Connection* for details.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖



File Transfer Special: Part 2

Serial File Transfer

The 'Universal' Method

As long as your desktop computer has a serial port, it is possible to transfer files to and from your Portfolio from it, regardless of make. In order to perform serial file transfer you need the following:

- The serial peripheral for your Portfolio.
- A terminal program for your Portfolio.
- A terminal program for your desktop PC.
- A 'null modem' cable to connect the two via their serial ports.

The serial peripheral adds the necessary hardware to your Portfolio to enable serial communications and the terminal program adds the necessary software. Essentially the terminal program converts your keyboard input to a form where it can be transmitted to the other computer as well as receive transmissions from the other computer. It should also, ideally, have the ability to send and receive files to and from the other computer.

Why a null modem cable? Well, this form of file transfer is the same method by which computers communicate with each other along a telephone line, using a modem. Information transmitted is sent down a single wire - from pin 3 in your serial port. Received information is also transferred down a single wire - in this case to pin 2 of your serial port. The modem cable which would connect a computer to a modem contains wires which connect pin 2 of the serial port to pin 2 of the modem and, similarly, pin 3 to pin 3.

Whilst this is fine for modems, if this cable were used for direct connection of one computer to another, one computer would be transmitting from pin 3 to pin 3 of the other computer (ie its transmit pin). Obviously, the transmit pin 3 should connect with the receive pin 2 of the other computer, so a null modem cable crosses the pin 2 and 3 connections so that pin 2 of one computer connects with pin 3 of the other and vice versa.

For the purposes of this article, we will look at the terminal programs available for the Portfolio and leave you to investigate the coms program for your own second or desktop computer.

Xterm2

Xterm2 is a public domain terminal program written by Jim Strauss and is the terminal program for the Portfolio recommended by Atari. Xterm2 is the most up to date version although earlier versions (eg Xterm1, Tmxm2) are still around. Xterm2 is small in size (2897 bytes) and will only work on the Portfolio. It offers the following features:

- Xmodem file transfer (checksum method)
- ASCII file transfer
- Text capture
- Simple macro facility

In order to transfer files other than straight text, a protocol

```
a:\>xterm2
XTerm 2.0  (c) 1990 Jim Straus
     F1=Quit F2=Receive F3=Send F0=Echo
SHIFT+ F1=Help F2=Capture F3=Text Send
CTRL+  F0 to F9=Send "0.XTM" to "9.XTM"
```

The opening screen of Xterm2

must be used which is the same for both computers and allows the file to be checked for errors as it is transferred. Xmodem is one of the more simple protocols.

Before starting the program, you should set the serial port settings on your Portfolio using the inbuilt set-up program. For direct file transfer between two computers you can use the highest baud rate of 9600. Generally, parity should be none, data bits 8 and stop bits 1. Normally the Portfolio's serial port should be initialized with the 'Initialize!' command , but Xterm2 will do this for you.

On starting Xterm2, you should see a small help screen. If all connections are correct and you have loaded the terminal program on your other computer, anything that you now type on your Portfolio will appear on the other computer's screen. The available commands are:

- **Fn+1** (or Atari key) - exit the program. This will also 'back out' of certain operations eg file transfers.
- **Fn+2** - Xmodem receive. Pressing the blue Fn key and 2 will cause a 'file to receive?' message to be displayed. Type in the name of the file you wish to transfer to your Portfolio. On your other computer, perform the necessary commands to 'upload' the same file to the Portfolio by the Xmodem checksum method. Start the upload on your other computer and press enter on the Portfolio. Files are transferred in 128 byte blocks using the xmodem method and for each 128 byte block transferred, a full stop or period will appear on the Portfolio screen followed by 'Done' when the process is complete. The file should now have been transferred to your Portfolio. You may notice that the file is slightly bigger. This is because the xmodem transfer protocol 'rounds up' the file to the nearest 128 bytes by padding it out with spaces.
- **Fn+3** - Xmodem send. This is essentially the same as

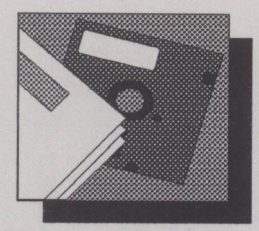
```
a:\>xterm2
XTerm 2.0  (c) 1990 Jim Straus
F1=Quit F2=Receive F3=Send F0=Echo
SHIFT+ F1=Help F2=Capture F3=Text Send
CTRL+  F0 to F9=Send "0.XTM" to "9.XTM"

File to send?
```

Preparing to send a file using Xmodem

receive files above but enables you to send a file from your Portfolio to the other computer eg for back-up purposes. This time you enter the name of the file to send and instruct your other computer to 'download' the named file by the xmodem (checksum) protocol. It is worth noting that there are other versions of the xmodem protocol such as xmodem (CRC) and xmodem 1k. Some terminal programs just have 'xmodem' transfer which may be the checksum, CRC or 1k

/continued overleaf



File Transfer Special Cont.

methods. Xterm2 can only transfer files by the checksum method.

- **Fn+0** (ie F10) - the echo command . Whatever you type will be 'echoed' on the Portfolio as well as the other computer. Pressing F10 again will toggle it off once more.
- **Shift+Fn+1** - display help screen. As you get into an Xterm2 session, the help screen will gradually scroll off the top of the screen. This command will redisplay it for you.
- **Shift+Fn+2** - screen capture, not really necessary for file transfer. This will transfer everything received to the screen to a file you name.
- **Shift+Fn+3** - text file send. Similar to xmodem send and receive but will only send a text file. Use the 'ASCII transfer' method on your other computer's terminal program. Text files can also be sent using the xmodem method so for the purposes of file transfer you may just as well use xmodem for all files.
- **Ctrl+Fn+0 to 9** - send the files '0.xtm' to '9.xtm'. Not really relevant for direct file transfer but useful when connecting to bulletin boards etc. by modem, by simplifying the log-on procedures. For example, I could make a file containing my name and name it 1.xtm. When logging on to a BBS using my Portfolio, in response to the "Please enter your Name>" message, I would just press Ctrl+Fn+1 and my name would be sent. This can save both time and telephone charges.

Overall, Xterm2 is a very straightforward program to use and good for serial file transfers. I initially had a few problems because the terminal program on my other computer used the xmodem(CRC) protocol and files would not transfer properly but once I had discovered this and changed to an xmodem(checksum) protocol, I had no further problems. Xterm2 is in Set CM1 - Coms 1.

Acom

Acom is larger than Xterm2 at 9955 bytes, but offers many more features and is a good choice if either your second computer is an IBM compatible or you use your Portfolio for telephone communications. Acom is written by Charles Cook of Roudley Associates who suggest a contribution of $25 for the program. This in itself represents excellent value but you are also given the option to give a donation to your favourite charity or church. Acom offers the following features:

- Xmodem CRC file transfer.
- Logging facility (ie screen capture).
- Scrollback - 100 line buffer to enable review of text.
- Line wrap.
- Moveable window for easy viewing of the virtual 80x25 screen of your Portfolio.

The following features only work if your second computer is an IBM compatible also running Acom:

- High speed file transfer between the Portfolio and an IBM compatible machine (up to 19200 baud).
- 'Shelling' feature which enables you to control your desktop IBM compatible from the Portfolio keyboard.

```
F1-Help                 F2-Xmodem receive
F3-Xmodem Send          F4-Send Text File
F5-Toggle Wrap          F6-Log
F7-Export Files         F8-Import Files
F9-Shell Remote         F0-exit
PageUp-Scrollback       Pagedown-Scroll
Up-Scroll line up       Down-Scroll line
Left-window left        Right-window right
```

Acom's Help Screen

Acom does not initialize the serial port for you like Xterm2 does so you must remember to do this yourself. The F1 to F6 commands are largely equivalent to the commands in Xterm2. F5 will cause text transmitted from the other computer to wrap when it reaches the end of the Portfolio screen. Alternatively, using the left and right arrow keys, you can switch back and forth from the left to the right side of an 80 column screen. PageUp and the up arrow keys allow you to review text which has scrolled off the screen, while page down and the down arrow keys allow you to return to your place. F6 will enable the capture of all received text to a log file. These commands are not of particular use for file transfer but VERY useful if you use your Portfolio for telecommunications.

File transfer is achieved by the Xmodem CRC protocol which gives improved error checking over the xmodem checksum protocol.

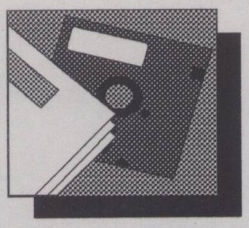
Acom really comes into its own if your other computer is an IBM compatible. Acom will work on any MsDos computer and loading acom on both your Portfolio and PC allows you to 'import' and 'export' files using the high speed transfer mode at speeds of up to 19200 baud which is ideal for backing up your memory cards. The shelling feature I have not found particularly useful, but there is a certain satisfaction in controlling a 386 computer from the keyboard of the Portfolio!

If you own a PC or use your Portfolio for telecommunications then I would say that the additional features of Acom make it a 'must have' for your collection. Even with another type of computer, using Acom will give you access to the xmodem CRC protocol and its more reliable error correction. However, for basic serial file transfer between your Portfolio and a second computer, Xterm2 is small, easy to use and reliable. Like Xterm2, Acom can be found in Set CM1 - Coms 1.

Slave

Slave differs from Xterm2 and Acom in that it is dedicated to easing communication between your Portfolio and other computers via direct serial connection. It is copyright Atari Computers, Australia, but has been placed in the public domain. According to the documentation it has been tested and found to work on the following computers: Atari ST, TT and Stacy, Apple macintosh, Commodore Amiga, IBM compatibles, Microbee and Epson CP/M laptop. To use the program, you need to load a terminal program on your second computer and Slave on your Portfolio. Once this is done, an introductory message appears on your

/continued overleaf

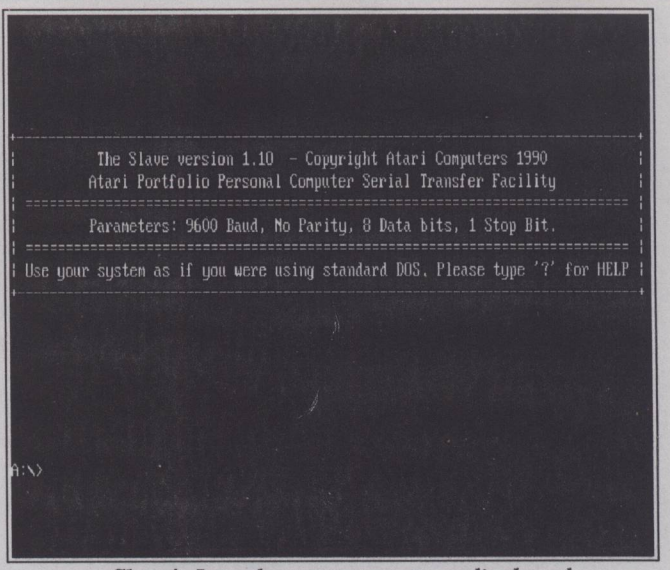


File Transfer Special Cont.

second computer followed by a DOS prompt. All operations on your Portfolio are controlled from your second computer from this point on. The following dos commands are available:

- DIR or DIR/W - gives a directory of your Portfolio. Wildcards are supported.
- TYPE <filename.ext> - displays a file
- C:, A: (or B:) - changes drive
- CLOCK - display (Portfolio's) time
- CD <name> - change directory
- MD <name> - make directory
- RD <name> - remove directory
- SEND <filename.ext> - sends a file from the Portfolio
- RECEIVE <filename.ext> - sends file to the Portfolio
- FREE - gives free disk space of current drive
- DEL <filename.ext> - deletes a file from the Portfolio

On the whole, Slave is very straightforward to use. If you forget the above commands, typing ? at the DOS prompt will display them for you. If you type in a command Slave does not understand it will respond with 'what?'. One niggle is that the send and receive commands appear the wrong way round as you are working from your


The Slave version 1.10 - Copyright Atari Computers 1990
Atari Portfolio Personal Computer Serial Transfer Facility
Parameters: 9600 Baud, No Parity, 8 Data bits, 1 Stop Bit.
Use your system as if you were using standard DOS. Please type '?' for HELP
A:\>

Slave's Introductory screen - as displayed on your other computer

second computer. If you type in RECEIVE readme.txt, the assumption is that the file 'readme.txt' is being sent from the Portfolio, but in fact it is being sent TO the Portfolio and it is the Portfolio which is RECEIVING it. File transfer is by the xmodem checksum protocol and progress of transfer is reported on both the Portfolio and your second computer.

All in all Slave is a nice program to use with one or two small irritations. Its biggest drawback is its size, 17K, even after compression which is big for the Portfolio. Slave is available in Set CM1 - Coms 1.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1...

ST3 - ST Accessories 2

A new set for Atari ST users:

- **STTalk** - a coms program that could be used as an alternative to Uniterm in Set ST1
- **P2ST & ST2Por** - are text files with tips on transferring files between Port & ST.
- **PortPart** - reviewed on page 9.

New Additions

These are the new files which have been added to existing sets.

Applications

These files have been added to Set AP2:

- Newuser - a 'how to' file for new Portfolio users in PRead format.
- Metro - gives area and state for Washington metro code.

and these to Set AP3:

- **SCI** - programmable scientific calculator.
- **Milcalc.wks** - calculate business & personal mileage.
- **Tc1inst.wks** - add time in hours & minutes. Good for tracking time spent on projects.
- **Ezref.adr** - database of Port accessories and sources as an address file.
- **Shday** - shows day of week for entered date.
- **TD** - an 'On this day in history' type program.

PBasic

The following new files can be found in the PBasic 2 set:

- **Bankacc** - a comprehensive accounts program for exporting to 'Quicken'.
- **Zodiac** -gives sign of zodiac for entered date..

Languages - Set PG2

- **BBCBasic** - works on Portfolio.

Utilities

These files are updates of those in Set UT2 - Utilities 2.

- **Portclok** - version 2.1
- **Portdiv** - version 2.2.
- **TMW** - version 2.

ST

STFolio has been moved to the new Set ST3 to make room for the following update:

- **PgfMaker** - enlarged and much improved version.

Update Set

For those of you who have already bought some of the sets mentioned above, all of the programs in this "New Additions" section are available in:

Set UP4 - Update 4

Worksheet Review Delayed

Due to the increase in size of this issue of *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter, we are unable to bring you the promised worksheet review this issue.

However, you can be sure it will be in the next issue and just to wet your appetite, here are a couple of quickie tips:

- Use Fn+5 to remove the border and display an extra two rows.
- Use Fn-0 to toggle between the current cell and the top of the worksheet. Useful for navigating larger worksheets.

more next issue.....

Customer Survey Prize Draw Winner!

Thanks to all of you who returned the questionnaire from the last issue. We had a marvellous response and the overwhelming message from you all is that we are giving you the service you want and to keep up the good work. We shall certainly aim to do this but have also taken on board your suggestions for improvements. However, more of this after we have announced the lucky winner of the 64k Memory Card, (filled with PD & Shareware from our catalogue). The winner is:

Mr R Magee of Mid Glamorgan

Congratulations Mr Magee, your card will soon be on its way to you. Sorry to all of you who did not win this time - the good news is there will be more competitions soon, so keep an eye on *The Portfolio Connection* Newsletter.

As a result of the questionnaire, we would like to report back on some of your suggestions which we already are, or shall be implementing in the next few months.

Catalogue

Most of you were satisfied with the catalogue but a few of felt you would like to know all of the files in a particular set, along with their descriptions, rather than the 'flavour' which we provide at present. Others of you would like to see file sizes or an indication of memory card size needed for each of the programs. There are also a few of you who would like to see screen shots from some of the programs. As a result, we shall be producing a new catalogue which should be sent out with the next newsletter in November and will, hopefully, incorporate most of these suggestions.

Sets

Most of you are happy with the present arrangement of the software into sets, but a few of you would like to see either a 'pick and mix' system or a set with a selection of programs from the other sets. The 'pick and mix' system is not viable at present without greatly increasing the cost to you and - as one of you said - you would miss out on discovering some really useful programs you would not otherwise have ordered! What we shall be doing in the first instance is to introduce a 'sampler' set. If the response is good, we may then move on to a 'mixed bag of the bimonth', which one of you suggested.

Newsletter

You gave us an overwhelming 'thumbs up' for the newsletter - thank you! A number of you said you would like to hear more about other Portfolio users' experiences and recommendations regarding programs and uses of the Portfolio. We think this is a marvellous idea, but this one is over to you. Write in to us at the address on page 7 with any information or tips you may have, programs you like or interesting ways in which you use your Portfolio. As an incentive, we shall be offering a free set for 'Letter of the Month'.

New Programs & Services

Your suggestions for new programs are far too numerous to list here. However, we shall be following up all of your suggestions - bear with us as these things do take time. Many of you wanted to see transfer packs for other computers, so you will be pleased to learn that a Serial Transfer Pack for the PC, Amiga and the Mac are on the horizon.

Portfolio Hardware

Quite a few of you wanted us to supply Portfolio hardware at discount prices and we are pleased to announce that we are now selling a range of peripherals at prices lower than we believe you will find elsewhere. These are badged 'Pocket PC' and we are able to supply most Portfolio peripherals on request - see the enclosed insert.

Finally....

Please don't stop letting us know what you think, just because the competition is over. We are always interested to hear what you like and don't like about our service and will do our best to meet your needs wherever possible.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Bug - Bears!

In spite of DIP's best efforts, a few bugs are prekent in the Portfolio's ROM. These can cause various difficulties such as lock-ups and 'divide by zero' errors. To counteract these problems, DIP have produced a small tsr called update.com which fixes the known errors. There have been a few versions along the way, updated from time to time to fix any new bugs which have come to light. The latest is version 1.07 and is 1664 bytes in size. This fixes the following problems:

- Copy CON: 10 character limit.
- Printers losing or replacing characters.
- No power down while executing a .RUN file.
- Card removal while executing a .RUN file.
- The byte at 0:8030 being lost on power down.
- "Space-Return" bug in the editor which is apparent only in versions 1.070 of the system and above.
- Alarm divide by zero.
- Int 24 C0 mapped out.
- DOS error on drive B:
- Print screen.
- Diary alarm problems.
- Empty text file.

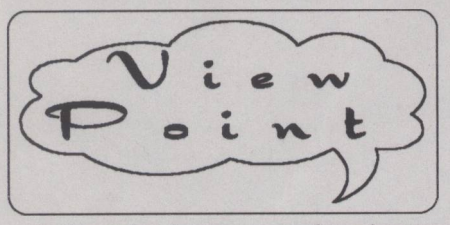
(Information taken from the file Update.doc in Set UT1)

Update.com is a 'must have' for your Port. Copy it to a memory card or C: drive and put a line in your autoexec.bat which reads:

Update

It will then be automatically invoked each time you reboot your Portfolio. A message saying 'update +OK' appears to let you know it has been successfully loaded. You should subsequently notice a significant decrease in the number of lock-ups and other problems. Update.com is available in Set UT1 - Utilities 1, but, if you request it, we are prepared to add a copy to any set you order - just put a note to this effect on your order form.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖



In this issue, we thought we would blow our own trumpet a little with comments from your questionnaires. The comments have been kept anonymous but are all genuine.....

"Professional. I hadn't realised that Portfolio users were this well organised..."

"Interesting and informative."

"...thank you for your first-class service and sheer quality of your product."

"Keep up the good work."

"An excellent service for an excellent product..."

"..a great read, I look forward to it."

"At last somebody who takes the Portfolio seriously.."

"Very, very good...."

"Great - before I discovered this I felt that the Portfolio was an interesting dead end.."

"Very interesting and lots of hints and tips."

"...keeps users informed of developments."

"Long may it continue!"

Write to us.....

Send your news, views and questions to:

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter
Bucklands Cottage, Wallingford Rd
Cholsey Oxon OX10 9HB

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Rogue Files

Here at *The Portfolio Connection* we try to test all files to make sure they do what they are supposed to before we make them available to you. However it is not always possible to test a program and we have to rely on the word of others and, in spite of our best efforts, the odd mistake or rogue program gets through. Obviously your feedback can help us track down these programs and we'll keep you informed in this occasional column. There are three this month:

Crib.com

One of our customers reported that this file on Set GM2 - Games 2 would not operate and, sure enough, we discovered that the master had become corrupted. We have now corrected the error but if any of you have Set GM2 and crib.com will not work, send us a blank disk and we will return it with the non-corrupted (ie working!) copy. Please note that the damaged crib.com will not harm your Portfolio - it just won't work.

Zip

Having recently acquired a serial peripheral, we were testing all the programs which require the serial interface. We found that we could not get the Zip file transfer program on Set AP3 - Applications 3 to work. At present we have removed it from the set but it may be that we have not correctly set up the program or Portfolio. The Portfolio may also need an earlier or later version so we will check this out. In the meantime, if you are having problems with Zip, or have managed to get it going! - let us know.

VDE

This excellent editor is on Set WD2 - Wordprocessing 2. In order to operate on the Portfolio it requires ansi.sys, which we unfortunately forgot to put in the set! We have now corrected this but as Set WD2 is so full, Lists has been moved to Set WD4 which had a wee bit of space left. Before use, VDE must be set up with the install program for ansi.sys operation and the parameter for PC clock speed should be set for "1". If you have Set GM1 - Games 1 or Set UT1 - Utilities 1 you can use the copy of ansi.sys in these sets for VDE. If you have Set WD2 but do not have a copy of ansi.sys, send us a blank disk and we will return it to you with ansi.sys.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Classifieds

- **For Sale** - Parallel Interface Brand new (unused) Includes file transfer software (no cable) £18 inc P+P Phone (0502) 518103
- **File Transfer** program disks only (5¼" & 3½") for Parallel Interface. Original disks, no longer have interface (stolen!) Offers? Phone Chris (081) 698-9138
- **For Sale** - Portfolio £90, 256k Ram Expander £90, 128k Card £85, PC Card Drive £45, Utilities ROM Card £30 or make me an offer for the whole outfit. I am also selling a 9-pin printer for £50. Phone David on (0422) 842790.
- **For Sale** - Portfolio 128k, one 64k, one 128k RAM Card, Serial Interface, Modem, 256k Expander, Science Card, PC Card Drive, £300 ono. May split. Contact Andy (0708) 750078.
- **DIP Pocket PC** (Atari Portfolio), 128k Ram Card, Serial Interface, Parallel Interface, Utilities Card, Finance Card, Science Card, Case, Mains Adapter. Will Split. Offers - James (0860) 599015.
- **For Sale** - Atari Portfolio and Parallel Interface. £120 ono Phone Frank Navarro on (0462) 491582.

Buyers & Sellers Directory

Some classifieds did not reach the newsletter as we are often phoned by people wanting Portfolio peripherals and, where possible, refer them to those of you who are selling equipment. As a result, we are starting a Buyers & Sellers Directory - contact *The Portfolio Connection* and let us know what you are selling. We will enter this into a directory. Those of you who are after specific Portfolio items can contact us and we will put you in touch with the sellers. Any items not sold by the next Newsletter will go in as classifieds. This should make for a quicker turnover all round so we'll try this scheme for a few months and see how it goes.

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter Classifieds are FREE. Send your advert to :

The Portfolio Connection Newsletter
Bucklands Cottage, Wallingford Rd
Cholsey Oxon OX10 9HB

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

The PBasic Column

From this issue, we start to look at some of the specific PBasic commands for the Portfolio. It is assumed that readers have a reasonable working knowledge of BASIC programming. If you don't and wish to gain this knowledge, there are many good books on BASIC available. As PBasic is largely compatible with GWBasic, a book on GWBasic programming is probably a good starting point.

The Menu Command

The menu command allows you to give a professional look to your programming by providing the same style menus as the Portfolio's appication software. The syntax is as follows:

MENU(Row, Col, Display, Top Line, Selected, Elements, "Title", "Entry 1", "Entry 2", "Entry 3"...etc)

where:

- **Row & Col** - indicate the position of the menu on screen.
- **Display** - is the number of menu items to display at any one time (max=6).
- **Top Line** - is the menu item to dispay at the top of the menu.
- **Selected** - is the menu item the cursor will be placed on.
- **Elements** - is the number of menu items + the title.
- **Title** - a string giving the title of the menu.
- **Entry** - a string for each item on the menu.

On selection a value from 0 upwards will be passed to the chosen variable (ie Entry 1 in the example above will give 0 and Entry 2 will give 1 etc). If Esc is pressed, -1 will be returned, which allows an exit function. Where the number of menu items is greater than the number displayed (see example program below), a number greater than 256 may be returned where the menu is not as originally displayed. This is slightly more complex but very useful as it enables the programmer to pinpoint the current top line and selected entry, so that the menu can be returned to in the same state, if required.

In this case a modulo statement (ie remainder) - %256, will give the selected element and integer division - \ 256, will give the current top line.

Example Program

This is a very simple program listing that will enable you to choose a game to play from a menu of four. In fact all four items would fit on the screen at once, but I have made only three items visible at any one time to show the scrolling effect.

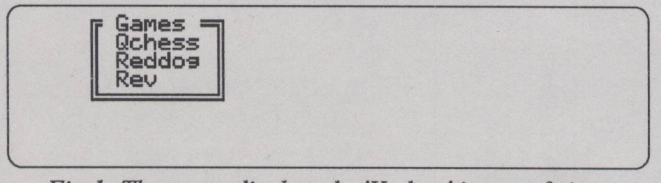


Fig 1. The menu displayed - 'Vaders' is out of view

gamemenu.bas

```
cls                         'Clear the screen
dim a$(5)                   'Dimension array to hold menu
                            items
data "Games","Qchess","Reddog","Rev","Vaders"
                            'Title/menu items as data
restore                     'Reset data counter
for count=0 to 4            'Loop to read in title/menu data
read a$(count)              'Read in data item to array
next                        'Next data item
choice=menu(1,6,3,0,0,5,a$(0),a$(1),a$(2),a$(3),a$(4))
                            'Menu generation & selection
Rem An alternative is choice=menu(1,6,3,0,0,-5,a$(0))
chosen=choice %256          'Menu item as one figure number
if chosen=-1 then cls:end       'End if escape pressed
cls                         'Clear screen
run a$(chosen+1)            'Run chosen game
```

In this example, selecting QChess will return a value of 0 to 'choice', Reddog a value of 1, Rev a value of 2 (see fig 1). Selecting Vaders (see fig 2) will return a value of 259 as we have left the original screen display. In this case choice %256 will give the selection value of 3 and choice \256 will give the top line as 1 (ie Reddog). As explained earlier, these values can be used to return to the same menu display later in the program. Similarly selecting Rev while the display is like this will return 258 and Reddog will return 257.

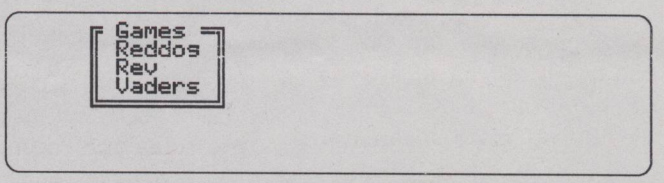


Fig 2. The menu has been scrolled to show Vaders'

If this aspect of the menu command confuses you - don't worry, it is possible to make good menus without using it at all. Just make sure all items are displayed.

The Rem statement below the menu statement shows a quicker method implemented with version 4.9 of PBasic. Entering the number of items as a negative number switches to automatic array mode. The title array variable is entered, a$(0), and PBasic will expect a$(1) to a$(4) to contain the menu items. Neat.

An even quicker way to make menus is to use the program **maker.exe** (in Set PB1 - PBasic 1). To use, copy maker.exe to your Portfolio and type maker (+ enter) from the DOS prompt. You are presented with a series of menus which are very straightforward. Add title and menu elements and if all is ok (you can display it to check), save your menu and exit the program. 'Saving' in this case, copies the PBasic code for your menu to the clipboard. All you have to do now is enter the editor and paste the code into your program. The code produced by maker for the above menu is as follows:

```
ssize=325:sav$=""
scrsave sav$
choice = menu(1,14,6,0,0,5,"Games","QChess","Reddog","Rev","Vaders")
scrload sav$
```

/continued over...

The PBasic Column Cont.

This menu is centred and will display all menu items at once, although maker will create scrolling menus if the number of items exceeds six. The menu items are entered directly as strings rather than as the variables in the original example and the above would need additional code to process the 'choice' variable.

You may be wondering about the 'ssize', 'scrsave' and 'scrload' commands. These will create a menu which pops up over an existing screen and then returns to the original screen after the choice is made. The 'ssize' command resets the string size from its default of 256 bytes to 325 - necessary if you wish to save screens. The sav$="" command initializes the string in which the screen will be saved. 'Scrsave sav$' then saves the screen to sav$ and 'scrload sav$' restores the screen after the menu has been implemented.

Well, I guess that's plenty for this issue - a more complex implementation of the menu command can be found as 'menu.bas' in Set PB1 - PBasic 1.

It may interest you to know that a 250 page manual for PBasic is available. It is 8½" x 11" with a comb binding so it can lay flat and each command is explained in detail with examples. *The Portfolio Connection* will be ordering some PBasic manuals in the next few weeks so if you would like one, let us know. The manual costs $35 but with exchange rates and shipping this will probably work out to around £25 each.

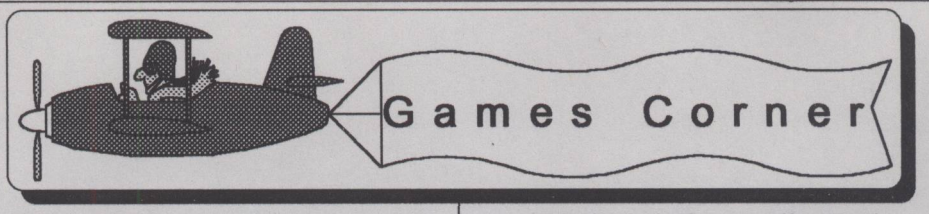
More on programming with PBasic in the next issue.....

PBasic (currently version 4.9) is a public domain basic interpreter for the Portfolio, written by B J Gleason of The American University.

Maker is a program which generates PBasic menu code quickly and easily and is written by David E Stewart. Both programs are in Set 1 - PBasic 1.

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

The contents of The Portfolio Connection Newsletter are ©1992 Peter Bennett

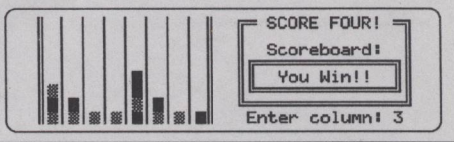


Portfour

Portfour by Centennial Software Systems is a 'Connect Four' type program and is in Set GM1. It offers easy and difficult levels against the computer or a two player option.

The aim is to get four blocks in a row - not hard on the easy level and harder but not impossible on the difficult level.

One niggle is that usually pressing escape will get you out of a program but in PortFour it just mucks up the display. You get an option to quit at the end of a game but otherwise press Ctrl+C. Apart from this - a good game.



Beginners Column

Welcome to our first beginner's column. Due to the amount of information in this issue, we have only room for a small column this time.

We are quite happy to decide on the hints and tips to include for those of you starting out with your Portfolio, but what would be much better, we feel, is for you to write to us with your specific queries and problems so that we can gear it more to your needs. - so write to us at the address on page 7.

Our tip for this month is that you check out Newuser.com in Set AP3. This is a Portfolio-based 'how to' information file about your machine. Once the file is on your Portfolio just type: Newuser and then press the enter key. Then use the up and down arrow keys to steer through the text at your leisure.

"Ah," we hear you say, "but How do I get it onto my Portfolio?" Well, if this is a problem just send us 2 x 18p stamps and we'll send you a printed copy! See you next issue...

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Atari Review

PORTPART: Addressing the Atari ST

Portpart is an address manager program for the Atari ST which allows you to write and modify Portfolio address files. It runs in either medium or high resolution and uses the familiar GEM drop down menus we all know and love.

The main benefit of this program is to allow the writing of address files on the ST using its full size keyboard. Once a file has been created (or loaded from disk) it is possible to manipulate the records in various ways.

The filesize is limited to 500 rekords on a 520ST, a file this big would probably be too large for an unexpanded Portfolio in any event. Records in the files are limited to 13 lines in length

Records can be selected by means of the search function (like "select cards" on the Portfolio), although Portpart will only search the top line of each record.

The program will allow the printing of records in full or just the top line of each record (handy to produce a quick reference of long lists).

Pressing the return key brings up a useful help menu for those with poor memories. There is also an undo option in case you accidentally delete in error.

The program works remarkably rapidly. Sorting and searching even quite long files is almost instantaneous, far quicker than the Portfolio can manage.

Portpart combines speed with ease of use and will give considerable time savings to anyone who uses the Portfolio Address Manager regularly or who has previously been deterred by the idea of extensive typing on the small keyboard.

Review by Chris Thompson

❖❖❖❖❖❖❖❖

Next Issue:

- !!!Big Prize Competition!!!
- Worksheet Review
- The PBasic Column
- Games Corner
- Beginner's Column

"Atari" and "Portfolio" are trademarks of the Atari Corporation
DIP" is a trademark of DIP Systems Ltd.